



**University of
Zurich**^{UZH}

**Zurich Open Repository and
Archive**

University of Zurich
University Library
Strickhofstrasse 39
CH-8057 Zurich
www.zora.uzh.ch

Year: 1989

**The Real and Imagined Role of Culture in Development: Case Studies from
Indonesia. Edited by Michael R. Dove. Honolulu: University of Hawaii
Press, 1988. Pp. xiii, 289. Figures, Photographs, Tables, Index**

Leemann, A

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0022463400018270>

Posted at the Zurich Open Repository and Archive, University of Zurich

ZORA URL: <https://doi.org/10.5167/uzh-154899>

Journal Article

Published Version

Originally published at:

Leemann, A (1989). The Real and Imagined Role of Culture in Development: Case Studies from Indonesia. Edited by Michael R. Dove. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1988. Pp. xiii, 289. Figures, Photographs, Tables, Index. *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 20(02):325-327.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0022463400018270>

The Real and Imagined Role of Culture in Development: Case Studies from Indonesia. Edited by MICHAEL R. DOVE. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1988. Pp. xiii, 289. Figures, Photographs, Tables, Index.

The subject of inquiry in the volume at hand revolves around the viewpoint adopted by many development planners that traditional cultures are static and therefore impede development. The merit of the 11 case studies is the empirically-supported evidence of the inner dynamics and vitality inherent in traditional cultures. Divided by the editor into five parts: ideology, economics, ecology, social change and evaluation, each individual study investigates a traditional culture, whereby its function with regard to the corresponding community is analyzed, the development measures described and their consequences discussed.

Part I, "Ideology", refers to the official Indonesian conceptualization of religion and its consequences for the minorities, who do not follow any of the recognized world religions. As Atkinson shows in her essay "Religion and the Wana of Sulawesi", their religion is not fossilized but has developed further in its contact with Muslims and Christians. There are obvious analogies between the Wana religion and the faith of the Sasak Boda of Lombok, who pay just as little homage to a "book religion", but consider their whole cultural heritage to be their religion (cf. Leemann, 1989: *Internal and External Factors of Socio-cultural and Socioeconomic Dynamics in Lombok, Nusa Tenggara Barat*). Degraded by followers of world religions as "orang yang belum beragama" (p. 49), self-assured Wana (and Sasak Boda) as opposed to this, refer to the seniority of their faith.

Such opposing points of view lead to tensions, which become all the more conflict-ridden as abidingness in a non-recognized religion is interpreted as an act of political subversion by the Government and persecuted. In their contribution "Shamans and Cadres in Rural Java", Rienks and Iskandar refer to the fact that the health cadre programme does not actually reach the village poor because the acceptance of the mentioned programme requires at the outset the renunciation of indigenous health care systems in favour of a new system, whose priorities are determined from without and have no relation to Javanese cosmology that deals with human vulnerability.

Part II, "Economics", contains amongst others, the essay by Brewer entitled "Traditional Land Use and Government Policy in Bima, East Sumbawa". The author refers to government programmes which are forcing intensive irrigated rice agriculture (at the cost of swidden cultivation) and which do not take into account that the two forms of land utilization are based on a fundamental difference in value systems. Whereas that of the swidden cultivators is aligned to work, that of the government is based on capital or land. It would be worth pursuing in depth the theme "Time as a neglected resource" — the preference for idleness is interpreted, however, by development economists as hidden unemployment, whereas subsistence-oriented people admit a higher benefit from non-work. Leisure and time make up *the* main social resource in such life-styles. Festivals have to be carried out and religious rituals celebrated in order to ensure social reproduction. Such time-consuming activities reinforce group identity and with that, unity and solidarity in a network of social security (cf. Groh on the interaction between prevailing ideas about time and economic behaviour, in *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 11 January 1989, p. 63).

In his essay “The ‘Wild Punan’ of Borneo: A Matter of Economics”, Hoffman shows that the Punan do not belong to one indigenous group of primitive, subsistence-oriented island-dwellers, but are forest-based wings of distinct, sedentary agricultural groups who have specialized as collectors of forest products and whose economy functions within larger trade networks which include the sedentary Dayak, coastal Malays and Chinese.

In Part III, “Ecology”, Dove postulates in his chapter “The Ecology of Intoxication among the Kantu’ of West Kalimantan”, that the physical environment of the Kantu’, according to the prevailing swidden technology necessitates a dispersion or scattering of the population in semi-autonomous socioeconomic units and how this requires, on the other hand, a periodical collaboration for the exchange of grain and labour. Dove attributes the function of the traditional Kantu’-system of ceremonial alcoholic intoxication to the maintenance of the above-mentioned exchanges thereby reducing the influence of environmental constraints on socioeconomic development. In the paper “Perception of Volcanic Hazards: Villagers Versus Government Officials in Central Java”, Laksono shows how the Javanese try to minimize imminent threats in that they monitor volcanic activity empirically and explain it within the framework of their religious system of meaning. They feel implicitly that staying in their original villages is less of a risk, than life in the lowlands of Sumatra under the government’s transmigration programme. The high death rate during the first two months after resettlement points to an overestimation of the human capacity to adjust to new living situations.

In his essay, “The Mentawai Equilibrium and the Modern World”, Schefold demonstrates how the Mentawai transfer the principles of conflict regulation between groups over to relationships between man and his environment. Just as man has to make allowances for his soul and the requirements of his fellow-man, so is he obliged to respect the souls of things in the natural world. Commercial deforestation stands in contradiction to the Mentawai ideology of harmony in the ritual specifications and prohibitions with regard to the maintenance of ecological balance, as does the resettlement of dispersed ‘uma’-communities in villages close to the coast.

Part IV is dedicated thematically to “Social Relations/Social Change”. Development planners see themselves *ex officio* as the main agents of social change considered necessary for modernization. This self-assessment fails to recognize that traditional societies adjust themselves to changing frames of reference if these innovations lie within their own interests. This point is confirmed by King’s contribution, “Social Rank and Social Change among the Maloh of West Kalimantan” and Daeng’s “Ritual Feasting and Resource Competition in Flores”. King describes how the traditional Maloh system of ranks has lost its earlier significance and has given way to other forms of socioeconomic differentiation under external pressure. None of the aspects of stratification based on economic strength, political power and ritually-determined superiority differentiates the aristocracy from the common Maloh. For his part, Daeng shows, that not all change is induced from outside the society. In his analysis of a religious faith in Flores, the author interprets the function of the early “boka goe” feast (by which two clans slaughter livestock competitively as regulator of the balance between the historically changing demographic structure of a population and its resources. While the manifest function of competitive slaughter lies in the regulation of disputes over land, the latent function is to mediate disputes over relative status or prestige, whereby the latter serves the purpose of enforcing the entitlement to land as a diminishing resource.

In Part V, "Evaluation", Appell discusses the theme "Costing Social Change" (pp. 271–82). From the point of departure that development and social change have become the uncontested aims of development planning, the author sees the task of anthropologists to be to show and measure the sociocultural costs inherent in social change. To inform planners of the negative effects of their efforts to modernize, the costs of the destruction of social systems have to be adequately measured, added to the development scheme and formulated in a language accessible to planners.

The eleven essays — each stimulating in its own right — are drawn together within a broader framework and commented with cross-references by Dove in his brilliant introduction, "Traditional Culture and Development in Contemporary Indonesia". The book deserves to occupy not only a place in every Indonesia-relevant library, but should also be compulsory reading for development experts.

University of Zurich

A. Leemann

Social Commitment in Literature and the Arts: The Indonesian "Institute of People's Culture" 1950–1965. By KEITH FOULCHER. Monash University: Centre of South-east Asian Studies, 1986. Pp. 234. Appendix, Bibliographic Notes, List of References Cited.

This book sets out to describe the character and evolution of LEKRA (Institute of People's Culture) and the circumstances that shaped it during the period 1950–65. It also contains examples of work by LEKRA writers. In the first chapter, "The shaping of Indonesian literary history", the author argues that those who have set the terms for the discussion of Indonesian literature since 1965–66, i.e. the liberal humanist school of literary criticism founded by Teeuw in the 1950s, have misinterpreted the Left's conception of literature and its role during the 1950–65 period. Teeuw is said (pp. 4–5) to have dismissed as without credibility the few left-wing writings mentioned in his *Modern Indonesian Literature* (1979), because they posited some intrinsic relationship between art and ideology. [To be exact, it was Marxism as an artistic creed to which Teeuw denied credibility, on the grounds that its literary products were so unconvincing (1979, vol. II, p. 31).] Jassin took a firmly anti-communist position and Yahya Ismail ignored LEKRA statements on the need to reconcile artistic individuality with collective commitment, although other critics have adopted a more liberal attitude towards left-wing literature. Radical voices have been confined to the periphery, and the "Teeuw-Jassin school" has attained the status of orthodoxy, in much the same way, the author suggests, as the Leavisite critical tradition once achieved legitimacy in the sphere of English literary studies.

In his second chapter Dr Foulcher begins by tracing LEKRA's origins to the climate of opposition towards the Indonesia-Netherlands Cultural Accord that was expressed at the conference on Indonesian culture held in Jakarta in August 1950. A few days later